

Spying among friends

By Pat M. Holt

IT was wrong for Jonathan Jay Pollard to spy on the United States for Israel. But it was not wrong for Israel to avail itself of Pollard's services. That's the way things are in the endless mirrored corridors of big-time international espionage, a field in which both Israel and the US are major players.

Spying is particularly delicate when you are doing it to a friend, probably with his money. This makes it especially embarrassing when you are caught at it. To minimize the embarrassment, Israel tried to give the Pollard operation plausible deniability: that is, if the operation went sour, the Israeli government could say, in effect, "Who? Us?" and wash its hands of the matter. This did not work any better for the Israelis in the Pollard case than it worked for the Eisenhower administration when the U-2 spy plane was shot down over the Soviet Union, or than for the Reagan administration when the contra supply flight was shot down over Nicaragua.

Pollard not only talked to his American prosecutors. He wrote letters, published in the Israeli press, in which he said he had felt an obligation to spy for Israel and now felt abandoned both by the Israeli government and the American Jewish community.

Those feelings need to be examined one at a time. Some spies do it for ideology; more do it for money. If Pollard was so high-minded, why did he accept \$2,500 a month, plus lavish European vacations, and the promise of \$300,000 in a Swiss bank?

As for abandonment by the Israeli government, what did Pollard expect? Every spy understands, or should understand, that if he is

caught, his principals cannot and will not help him. The Soviets and Americans occasionally exchange spies, but that is long after trial and imprisonment. Pollard should also have understood that, if he were caught, the Israeli government would not want to add to its problems with the US by pleading his case.

Finally, there is Pollard's feeling of abandonment by the American Jewish community. The community is upset, and rightly so. Did Pollard really expect American Jews to rally around a confessed spy?

Some Israelis are coming to his defense, raising money to pay his

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legal fees. That is no doubt an embarrassment to the Israeli government, but it is an Israeli, not an American, problem.

A more recent development in the case is an American problem, however. That is the question of whether or not Israelis have spied on Israel on behalf of the US. The implication is that if so, it tends to absolve Pollard and, by extension, all Israeli espionage in the US. That does not follow.

It is to be hoped that the US has conducted espionage operations in Israel. There are things in Israel that the US government needs to know and that the Israelis are not at all forthcoming about. The Israeli nuclear program is close to the top of the list. If the Israelis catch an American spy, they should deal with him as the US has with Pollard; the US could not complain.

There are many reasons why the Pollard affair troubles US-Israeli relations more than would be the case with, say, US-French relations if Pollard had been caught passing secret nuclear data to the *force de frappe*. The CIA and the Mossad, its Israeli counterpart, have long had exceptionally close and mutually beneficial relations. Can these continue? How many more Pollards are there that the US has not yet caught?

More basically, there is the problem of mutual dependence of the two countries in the context of an asymmetrical relationship. The existence of Israel has been a given of US foreign policy for 40 years. To protect that existence, uncounted billions of US aid have flowed into Israel. This creates an unhealthy relationship. Beyond a certain point, long since past, the tail begins to wag the dog.

The US has had similar relationships in the past with such client states as South Korea, Taiwan, and South Vietnam. The USSR is close to such a relationship with Cuba. Economic growth in South Korea and Taiwan eventually solved most of the American problems there. Military collapse solved, or at least ended, the American problem in South Vietnam. The US cannot afford military collapse in Israel, and enough economic growth there seems a pipe dream.

Maybe the US could begin to make some modest reductions in aid, anyway, and thereby move toward a healthier balance. The US doesn't need to finance Israeli invasions of Lebanon; Washington certainly ought not to finance Israeli espionage activities in the US.

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